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G.I. JOE
image
#24

ENERGON UNIVERSE

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G.I. JOE

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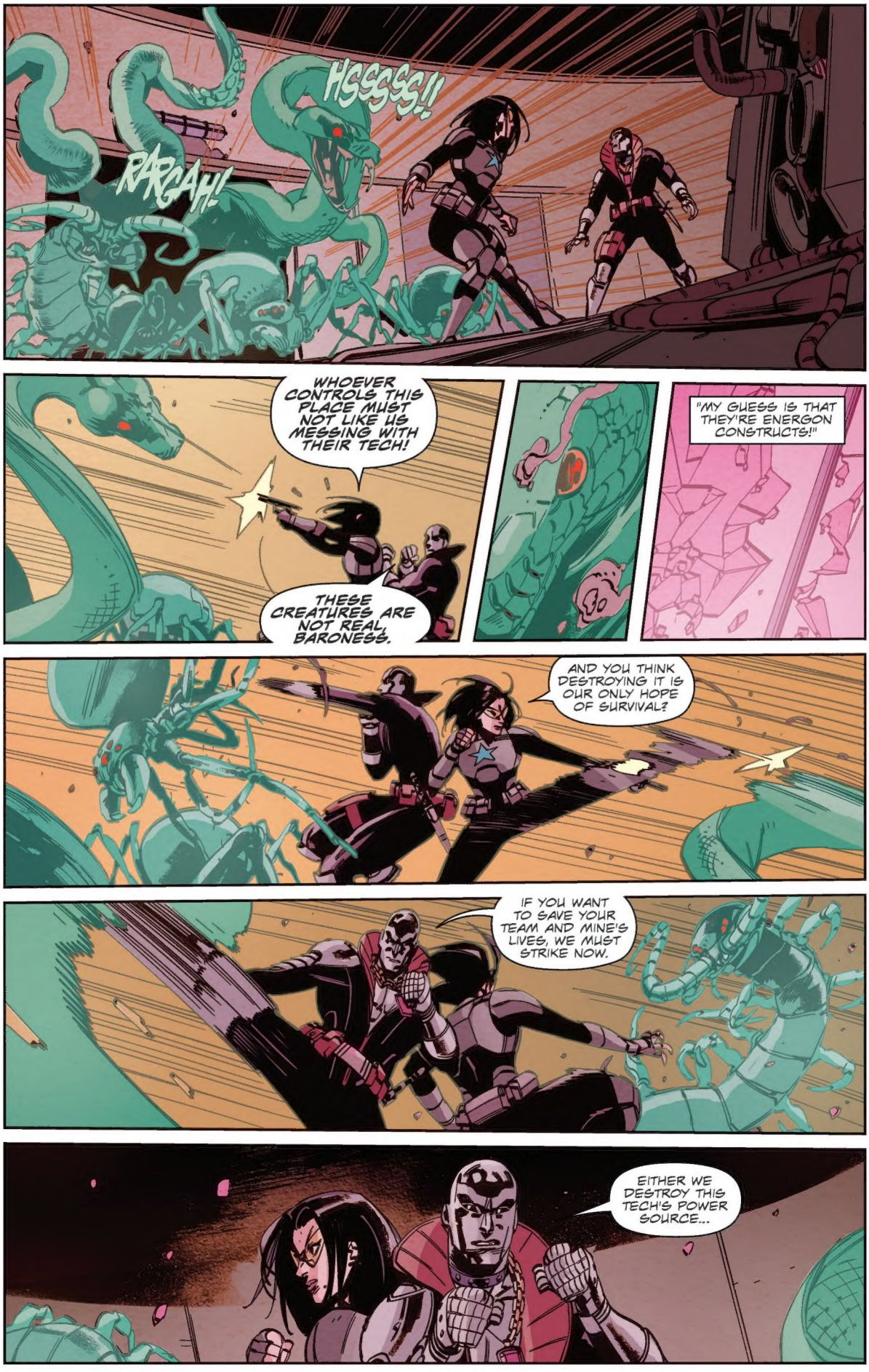
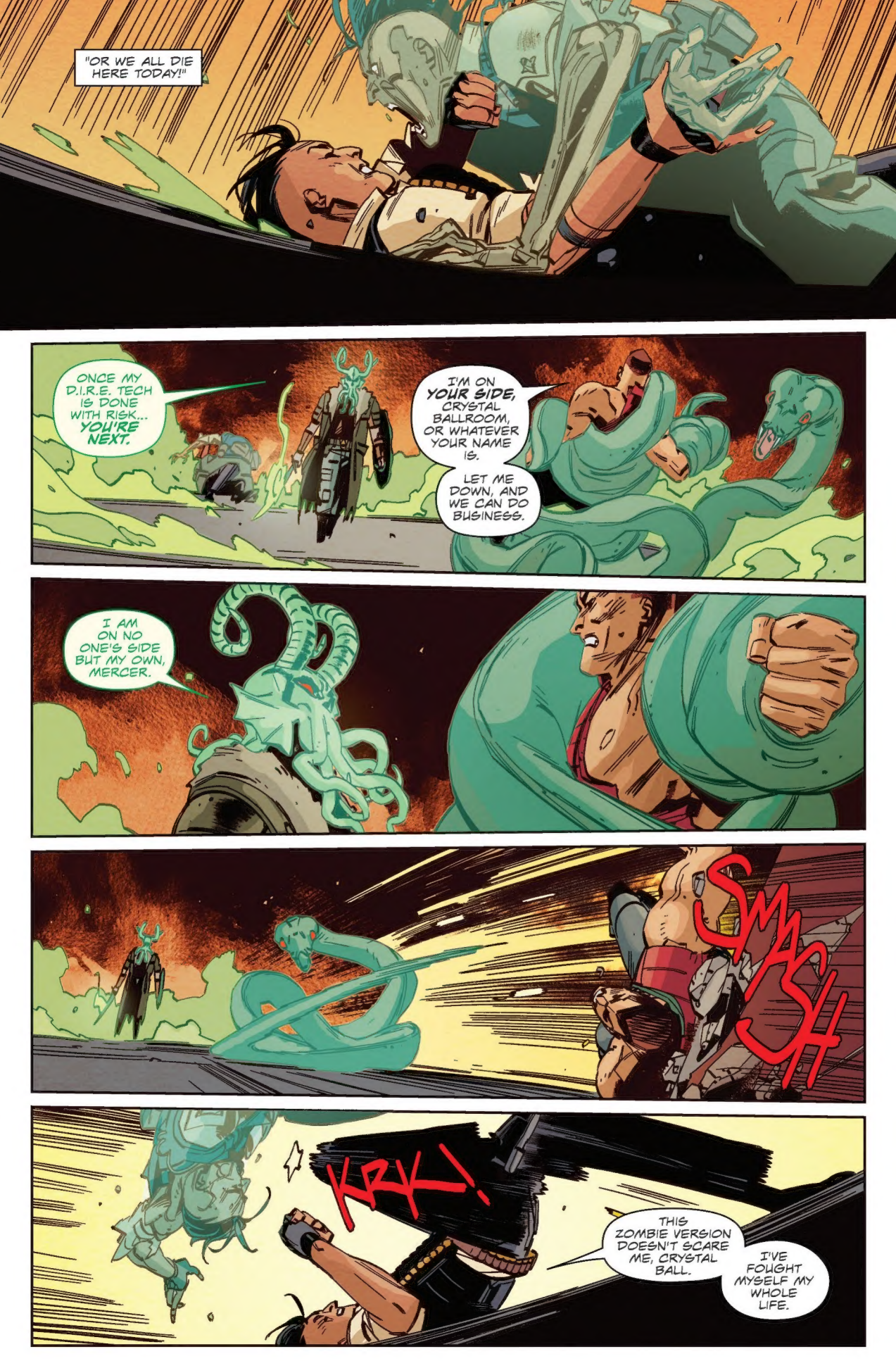
WHO ARE YOU?!
I AM THE SEVENTH SON OF THE SEVENTH SON!
WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?
AH, CRAP!
IT MEANS I WAS DESTINED FOR GREATNESS.
YOU MAY CALL ME CRYSTAL BALL.
BUT ONCE I WAS LIKE YOU...

"A TOOL.
"FOR YEARS, I WORKED AS AN INTERROGATOR FOR THE AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. JUST ANOTHER COG IN THE GREAT WAR MACHINE. BUT THAT WAS NOT MY TRUE PASSION.
"EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, I WAS OBSESSED WITH THE SECRETS IN OUR MINDS AND HOW TO UNCOVER THEM. I STUDIED WAYS TO FORCE THEM OUT. I CLANDESTINELY WORKED ON A NEW KIND OF TECHNOLOGY THAT COULD DO JUST THAT...
"BUT AN AGENT OF EVIL TRIED TO STEAL IT FROM ME. I MANAGED TO ESCAPE THE STATES AND CAME TO BADHIKISTAN.
"HERE I WAS ABLE TO EXPERIMENT IN PEACE. THE CITIZENS THOUGHT IT WAS GHOSTS.
"EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN I FOUND POWER BURIED DEEP WITHIN THE MOUNTAINS. I HAD HEARD WHISPERS OF IT. DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AROUND THE WORLD. A SWAMP. A DESERT...
"I LATER LEARNED IT WAS CALLED ENERGON."
IT CHANGED EVERYTHING. IT ALLOWED ME TO CREATE...

"MY D.I.R.E. TECH.
"DREAD INDUCING RESPONSIVE ENERGY.
"AT FIRST, I USED IT TO TURN THE FEARS OF THIS SMALL TOWN'S CITIZENS INTO REALITY..."
POWERED BY THE ENERGON, IT CREATES CONSTRUCTS THAT ANSWER MY EVERY COMMAND.
AS MERCER UNDERSTANDS, YOU SEE.
GET OFF ME!
SO, NONE OF THIS WAS ANY KIND OF SUPERNATURAL MUMBO JUMBO?
IT'S ALL JUST SOME HIGH-TECH MACHINES?
GOOD TO KNOW. I CAN PUNCH A MACHINE.
MY WORK IS MORE THAN JUST SOME MACHINE.
IT PEERS INTO YOUR MIND AND TURNS YOUR FEARS INTO SOMETHING REAL.
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU FEAR MOST...
YOU FAILED YOUR PARENTS! YOU FAILED YOUR TEAM...
AND NOW YOU FAIL G.I. JOE!

AAAHHHH!!!
YOU FIND ANYTHING, DESTRO?
NOTHING THAT WILL FREE CHAMELEON AND STALKER FROM THIS TORTURE.
SOUNDS LIKE A HELLISH NIGHTMARE...
HE'LL KILL ME IF HE FINDS OUT!
NO, NOT THE JUNGLE! NOT AGAIN!
YOU SAID TRYING TO FREE THEM WHILE THE MACHINE STILL RUNS COULD KILL THEM.
THESE MACHINES ARE POWERED BY ENERGON. WE SAW THE VAST STORAGE OF IT IN THE HALLS OUTSIDE.
PERHAPS THE KEY TO SURVIVAL IS TO REMOVE ITS ENERGY SOURCE.
WEAPONIZE THE ENERGON. CREATE AN EXPLOSION THAT DISABLES ALL THE TECH HERE.
EXCUSE ME?
ARE YOU INSANE? WE CAN'T DESTROY THE ENERGON.


HSSSS!!
RARGAH!
WHOEVER CONTROLS THIS PLACE MUST NOT LIKE US MESSING WITH THEIR TECH!
THESE CREATURES ARE NOT REAL, BARONESS.
"MY GUESS IS THAT THEY'RE ENERGON CONSTRUCTS!"
AND YOU THINK DESTROYING IT IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF SURVIVAL?
IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR TEAM AND MINE'S LIVES, WE MUST STRIKE NOW.
EITHER WE DESTROY THIS TECH'S POWER SOURCE...


"OR WE ALL DIE HERE TODAY!"
ONCE MY D.I.R.E. TECH IS DONE WITH RISK... YOU'RE NEXT.
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, CRYSTAL BALLROOM, OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS.
LET ME DOWN, AND WE CAN DO BUSINESS.
I AM ON NO ONE'S SIDE BUT MY OWN, MERCER.
SMASH
KRK!
THIS ZOMBIE VERSION DOESN'T SCARE ME, CRYSTAL BALL.
I'VE FOUGHT MYSELF MY WHOLE LIFE.

"I TOOK THE DEEP UNDERCOVER MISSIONS THAT NO ONE ELSE WOULD. EACH ONE I WAS ALWAYS A MINUTE AWAY FROM DEATH.
I VOWED TO NEVER SEND ANYONE INTO THE FIELD ON A MISSION THAT I THOUGHT WAS TOO DANGEROUS. I ALWAYS MADE IT BACK BECAUSE I DIDN'T CARE IF I LIVED OR DIED.
"AFTER A WHILE, I LEARNED THAT SOMETIMES TO HELP PEOPLE YOU HAVE TO HURT PEOPLE.
PEOPLE THINK I TOOK ON THE NAME RISK BECAUSE I'M SOME KIND OF THRILL SEEKER. MY BOSSES THOUGHT I HAD A DEATH WISH.
"BUT, NO, I TOOK THAT NAME..."
BECAUSE I AM THE RISK!
SWP!

HOW NICE FOR YOU.
AH!
SHHA
BUT YOU'RE STILL GOING TO DIE TODAY.
IF I DIE TAKING YOU DOWN, SO BE IT.
WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS, BARONESS.
FINE, I'LL COVER YOU.
BUT THIS BETTER WORK!
TURNING ANYTHING INTO A WEAPON IS PART OF MY BLOODLINE.
JUST KEEP THE CREATURES BUSY.

KRAK
DESTRO! HURRY!
HSSSS
HSSSS
PATIENCE, MY DEAR BARONESS.
BE READY TO RUN...
KRAKAKA!
KRAKAKA!
NOW!
MY ENERGON...?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

BOO!
KRAK!
KOSH-BOOM!
WE WORK WELL TOGETHER, BARONESS.
I AGREE.
BUT ALL GOOD THINGS...
MUST COME TO AN END.

WHY DID YOU LET THEM ESCAPE?
THEY HELPED US.
WHY DID YOU LET THEM LIVE?
THEY HELPED US.
LET'S FIND RISK AND GET THE HELL OUTTA THIS PLACE, STALKER.
HAWK IS NOT GOING TO BE HAPPY THIS MISSION WAS A BUST.
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT...

WE'RE BRINGING BACK SOME GUESTS.
WE MIGHT NOT HAVE GOTTEN THE ENERGON...
BUT I THINK THIS MISSION WAS STILL WORTH IT.
LET'S GO HOME.

COBRA HEADQUARTERS UNDER SPRINGFIELD.
HOLD ON AND LET ME EXPLAIN.
CHAMELEON. CHAMELEON.
ASTORIA, ANSWER ME!
LOVERS' QUARREL?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, COMMANDER.
EVERYTHING HERE IS MY BUSINESS, DESTRO.
YOU PROVED YOUR LOYALTY BY RETURNING WITH SOME ENERGON.
HOWEVER, YOU LOST YOUR MAN MERCER AND ALLOWED G.I. JOE AGENTS TO LIVE?
I TRUST MERCER. HE WILL NOT BETRAY US. AS SOON AS WE LEARN HIS WHEREABOUTS, WE WILL STAGE A RESCUE...
BUT FIRST LET ME SHOW YOU THAT ALL WAS NOT FOR NAUGHT.
AS I ESCAPED, I WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN THIS...

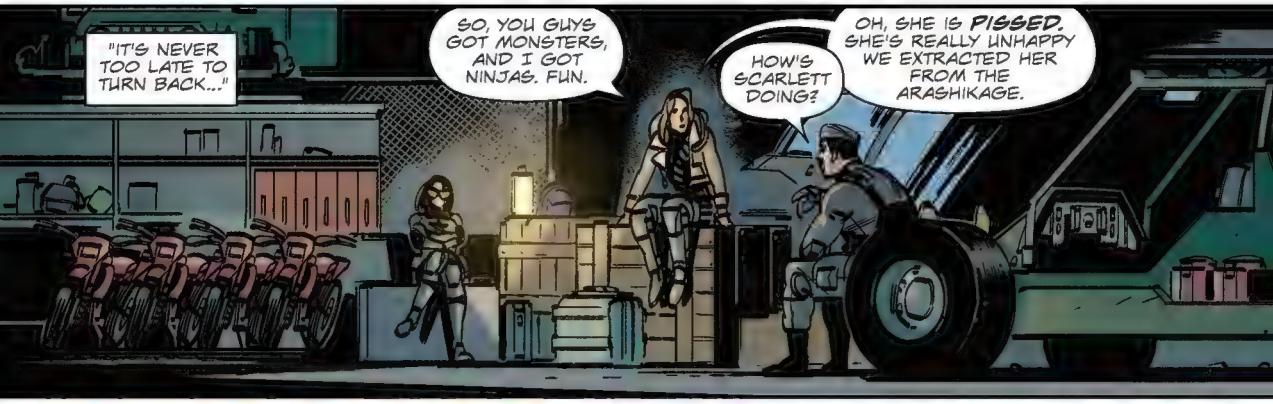
D.I.R.E. TECH.
IT CONVERTS FEAR INTO A WEAPON.

NOT ONLY DID I FIND THIS TECHNOLOGY, I FOUND CRYSTAL BALL'S FILES ON IT. NOW ALL HIS DATA IS OURS.
IT'S A DIFFERENT KIND OF WEAPON. ONE THAT I BELIEVE WE CAN SELL TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER.

HM. OR NOT.

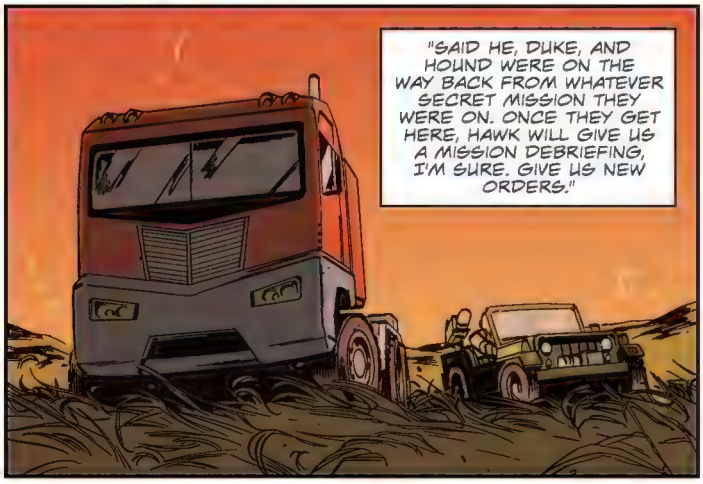
YOU HAVE BEEN LOYAL, VALKYRIE.
YOUR CUNNING AND BRAVERY IN OUR ATTACK ON THE ARASHIKAGE TEMPLE SHOULD BE REWARDED.
I ASK FOR NO REWARD, COMMANDER. ONLY TO BE YOUR SERVANT. TO FIGHT AND KILL IN YOUR NAME.
THAT IS WHY I NEED YOU. WHY I MUST ASK YOU FOR A GREAT... SACRIFICE.
I WILL HOLD YOU TO THAT.
I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.
DON'T BE AFRAID.

THE PIT.
COBRA WILL COME FOR ME.
THEY'LL BREAK IN ANY MINUTE AND BRING ME HOME.
MAYBE. BUT EACH PASSING MINUTE THAT THEY DON'T...MUST HURT. YOU REALLY QUESTION IF THEY CARE ABOUT YOU AT ALL, RIGHT?
WHATEVER, RISK. I REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE. ABOUT BEING ON MISSIONS G.I. JOE WOULDN'T LIKE. YOU MIGHT BE G.I. JOE TODAY, BUT SOON ENOUGH, THEY'LL SEE HOW YOU REALLY ARE, AND YOU'LL BE BACK ON YOUR OWN.
STILL BETTER THAN JOINING A PLACE LIKE COBRA.
DON'T ACT LIKE WE'RE NOT ALIKE, I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FIND YOURSELF GOING DOWN THAT PATH OF HATING YOURSELF AND FINDING YOURSELF NOT EXACTLY IN THE PLACE YOU WANTED TO BE IN...
THEN YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW, MERCER.

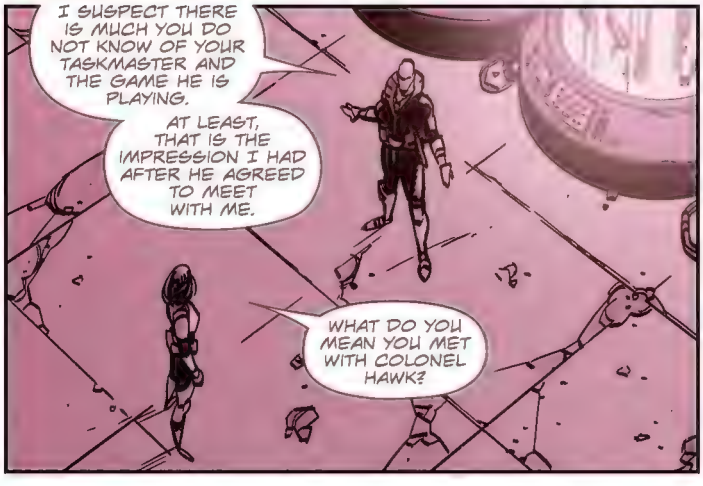

"IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO TURN BACK..."
SO, YOU GUYS GOT MONSTERS, AND I GOT NINJAS. FUN.
HOW'S SCARLETT DOING?
OH, SHE IS PISSED. SHE'S REALLY UNHAPPY WE EXTRACTED HER FROM THE ARASHIKAGE.

"SHE'S IN A SAFE HOUSE WITH SNOW JOB WHILE HE DEBRIEFS HER ON EVERYTHING SHE WITNESSED DURING HER TIME WITH THE NINJAS."

I DON'T KNOW WHY HAWK WANTED HER BACK SO BADLY. MAYBE THE ARASHIKAGE CLAN HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF COBRA OR ENERGON?
CLUTCH RADIOED IN.

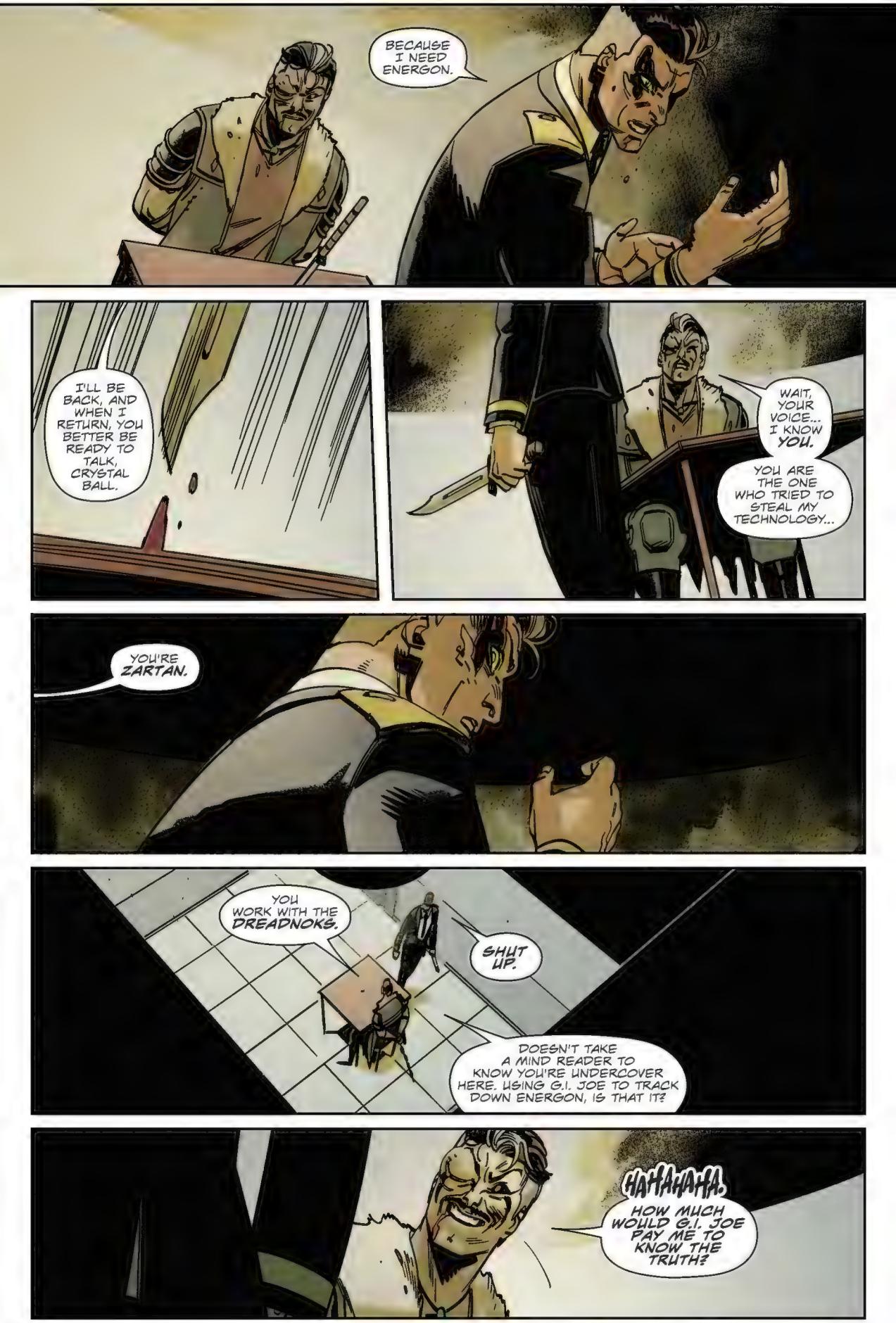

"SAID HE, DUKE, AND HOUND WERE ON THE WAY BACK FROM WHATEVER SECRET MISSION THEY WERE ON. ONCE THEY GET HERE, HAWK WILL GIVE US A MISSION DEBRIEFING, I'M SURE. GIVE US NEW ORDERS."

I DON'T BELIEVE HAWK WANTS US COMPARING NOTES
YOU DON'T TRUST COLONEL HAWK?
I KNOW I AM NEW TO THE WORLD OF WORKING FOR THE POWERS THAT BE AND "NEED TO KNOW", BUT SOMETHING DESTRO SAID...


I SUSPECT THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT KNOW OF YOUR TASKMASTER AND THE GAME HE IS PLAYING.
AT LEAST, THAT IS THE IMPRESSION I HAD AFTER HE AGREED TO MEET WITH ME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU MET WITH COLONEL HAWK?

I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR OUR LEADER, BUT...
WHERE IS HAWK?

I'VE BEEN IN MANY INTERROGATION ROOMS IN MY LIFE. ON BOTH SIDES OF THE TABLE.
YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANYTHING OUT OF ME.
THIS ONE MIGHT BE A BIT DIFFERENT.
THUNK
HA. PLEASE. WHEN DOES THE GOOD COP SHOW UP?
YOU FOUND THE ENERGON DEPOSIT BEFORE. YOU MUST HAVE A HIDDEN STASH SOMEWHERE. IF YOU TELL ME WHERE IT IS, I CAN HELP YOU.
WHY ARE YOU HANDLING THIS INTERROGATION? I CAN SEE YOUR RANK, COLONEL. ISN'T THIS BENEATH YOU?
BECAUSE...
AH, DAMN...


BECAUSE I NEED ENERGON.
I'LL BE BACK, AND WHEN I RETURN, YOU BETTER BE READY TO TALK, CRYSTAL BALL.
WAIT, YOUR VOICE... I KNOW YOU.
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO TRIED TO STEAL MY TECHNOLOGY...
YOU'RE ZARTAN.
YOU WORK WITH THE DREADNOKS.
SHUT UP.
DOESN'T TAKE A MIND READER TO KNOW YOU'RE UNDERCOVER HERE. USING G.I. JOE TO TRACK DOWN ENERGON, IS THAT IT?
HAHAHAHA.
HOW MUCH WOULD G.I. JOE PAY ME TO KNOW THE TRUTH?

SHASH-SA
DAMN, IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I LET MY TEMPER GET THE BETTER OF ME, AND--
HAWK...?

STRAIGHT SHOOTERS

DIRECT ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: GIJOE@SKYBOUND.COM

Welcome back to another edition of Straight Shooters where writer Joshua Williamson and I happily answer all your questions to the best of our ability…right Joshua?

YUP! LET'S DO THIS!

But wait…holy crap, did you see that ending? If you thought this book was wild before, get ready for it to get nuts now. This one moment is the catalyst for a lot of excitement and big stories coming to the title. The roller coaster is about to take off and it's going to be a lot of fun. You'll see how the end of this issue sends us flying into the next year with the biggest stories we've ever told in the Energon Universe.

Let's open up this mailbag…

Dear Joe Team

I just wanted to say I love G.I. Joe. Love number 20 with Optimus Prime and Duke. I just have to ask, is Jinx Dead? I hope not I really liked her and I hope she can join the team.

James

Thank you for the letter, James. #20 was a powerful issue and touched a chord with many fans.

NOPE. She's not dead. Hurt? Yes. Really angry? YOU BET. Glad you loved #20!

Yo Joe!

Man, issue #21--what an amazing issue! I'll have to admit to only keeping up with G.I. Joe sporadically, but I'm glad this is the month I decided to catch up! I always love a silent issue, and Tom Reilly's really excellent. He and Lee Loughridge pair wonderfully together. I was also a big fan of the minimal use of sound effects. Rus Wooton's sound effects are the reason he's one of my all-time favorite letterers, but less was really more here--bravo!

I can't wait to see what's in store next!

JG

Thank you for the letter, JG! I have to agree--Tom, Lee, and Rus are really doing amazing work on this series! Be sure to check out #25 next month if you want to have your mind totally blown!

Yeah, Tom was the star of the show in #21. He really killed it. Such an amazing issue. It's one of my favs we've done. It really highlights how no one does action and fight scenes as well as Tom. Glad you liked it!

Yo, Joes!

I'm really liking the way you're depicting this new version of G.I. Joe. Cobra Commander here makes me think of Charlie Adler's voicing him in Resolute and Renegades, and his outfit here is both formal and perfect for a military dictator. Speaking of the good Commander, will we get to see more of his past, like how he ran into Cobra-La and if there's a son named Billy involved, what he'll do to "motivate his people to think," and if there's a chance he'll get bumped off, temporary or permanently, by a "secret successor" like in the ARAH comics?

Because that was such a major piece of the ARAH mythology, I don't think we'll get into the Billy storyline. We will dive more into Cobra Commander's backstory and how he was in Cobra-La, but I also don't want to kill his mystique.

Is Cobra-La going to be officially confirmed as the hidden sanctuary for an extraterrestrial civilization that colonized Earth in the distant past, are there any non-soldier civilians that will be brought up eventually, and what kind of evils will we be expecting from Golobulus himself?

We will be exploring Cobra-La in major ways soon. I think you'll be surprised how and where we do it. Trust me when I say that Cobra-La is a major player in the Energon Universe.

Will Snake-Eyes eventually appear to take sides in the Energon Universe?

Who is Snake-Eyes?

Will there be other elements that will affect Void Rivals aside from Pythona's space exploration mission? Is there a chance Arkonus has a grudge against the crew who deserted him on Skuxxoid's spaceship, and will that extend to the rest of his people as well?

Those are things you need to read VOID RIVALS to get answers on.

And how will Duke cope with that fact that Starscream died before he got any closure in confronting him himself?

You'll see! Stay tuned!

That's all for now,
Mike

That's a lot of great questions, Mike. Sorry that I'll have to give you my traditional "keep reading!" response as most of the above will be revealed over time. I, for one, am VERY interested to see how Akronus treats his former compatriots if/when they reconnect.

The events happening in VOID RIVALS are 100% things to keep a close eye on in the Energon Universe and the plans we have for the future. It's all connected.

What's up Straight Shooters!

This series continues to never disappoint, from the amazing ending of the Dreadnok War which set the stage for many months to come to this current horror arc with Crystal Ball! G.I. Joe is always the last comic I read in my stack as I know it's going to be a real treat. Andrea and Lee are the perfect team for the creepy crawlies with heavy inks and the dark colors that bleed from them. Let's not forget the stellar Rus with crisp lettering to pull us along. Last is the incomparable Joshua who has yet to deliver a bad story in ANYTHING I've read of his (the unhinged tandem of Crystal Ball and Superboy Prime in the same month?? You lunatic!!)

From issue 22

1. I love how level headed Destro is in the field, very much the strategic thinker (I will never not hear Arthur Burghardt voicing him)

2. Shocking backstory to Risk, gotta know more

3. Baroness maintains an ice queen persona

4. And I'm guessing this arc was inspired by The Phantom Bridge episode of the original ARAH

Yous keep making them, I'll keep buying them! Yo Joe!!

Shawn

Thank you for the letter and monthly support, Shawn--it's very much appreciated! We're fortunate to have such an amazing group of creators on this book every month.

NICE. That is awesome to hear. Thank you for the kind words! Glad you're digging what we're doing here. (And my work elsewhere.) Now, as for what inspired this arc. It wasn't The Phantom Bridge episode, but I was greatly inspired by another episode that I think would shock, or the very least, surprise people. I don't know if I want to say what episode it was, yet. It was 100% one of the weirder episodes that had Baroness and Destro in it. I'm curious if anyone can read these 3 issues and then guess what it was…

To the G.I. Joe team

I want to thank you for writing this series, I've loved G.I. Joe ever since my dad showed me the original run when I was a kid. I started reading this a little late but I've been in love with it since. Do you guys have any plans with Firefly?

Thank you for writing.
Nicholas

Thank you for reading, Nicholas. In regards to Firefly, you'll have to keep reading!

Dude, I'm always thinking of Firefly. He's 100% one of my favs, and I think I finally found an awesome way to introduce him. So yeah, keep reading!

Hello G.I. Joe Team,

Long time reader, first time letter writer. First off, I really loved the interaction between Hound and Clutch during issue #20. It was funny to see them talk about Duke and Optimus. Little moments like that are just phenomenal.

Yeah, Clutch and Hound are two of my favorite characters to write. They make such a fun partners in crime. They are both a bit less serious, so they get a lot of great lines and scenes.

Secondly, with all the characters being introduced in G.I. Joe, and to the same extent the other Energon Universe titles, I think it would be nice to see a character handbook be developed to help explain who's who a little further. I think character bios are a very underrated thing in general, and they help those unfamiliar with some of the characters get better acquainted. I wholeheartedly believe it's worth looking into.

I 100% agree! Fingers crossed!

Lastly, can you guys give any comment on when we'll see more vehicles take the spotlight? They're a very underrated part of the franchise and I find they're sometimes never shown off enough in some media.

Keep up the good work,
Anthony

First time letter is now a first time published letter--thank you, Anthony! A handbook is something we've been discussing for a long time, so please stay tuned!

We have a few new vehicles coming in the next G.I. Joe versus Night Force arc! I'm always down to bring in more vehicles. I was a big fan of the vehicles as a kid. I just need to find story reasons to introduce them. We just brought the Snowcat in #21. And we'll have more in the future. Is there a favorite of yours that you're dying to see?

That's a wrap for this month, folks! Please keep the letters rolling in and see you next month with our EPIC 25th issue!

-Ben

Hope you're excited by this month's cliffhanger and are ready for the wild ride to start in next month's #25! As always, thank you for writing in! Before I go…what are some G.I. Joe or Cobra vehicles you all wish we would introduce? We always hear about the characters, but rarely the vehicles. So let us know! I'm curious.

-Joshua

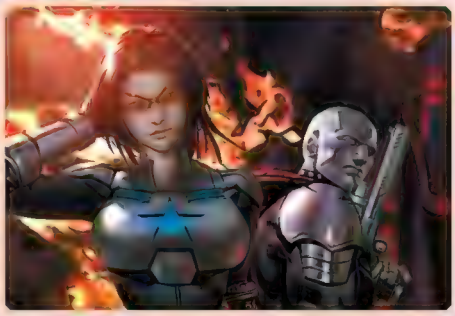
Bmm!

CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

WHO: Crystal Ball

Terrorist and master interrogator.

WHAT: Crystal Ball is an inventor, master interrogator, and the seventh son of the seventh son. Developing cutting edge tech powered by Energon is but one of his many accomplishments...but was it his last?



THE DYNAMIC DUO!

Baroness and Destro make a good team, who'd have guessed it? And despite the outcome, Mercer and Risk discovered they might have more in common than they'd care to admit. Maybe Chameleon and Stalker will get to team-up next time!

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Q: Here we are once more asking creators the difficult questions. Joshua Williamson, who/what was the first G.I. Joe toy you got as a child?

A: Oh man, that is tough. I don't think I got just one toy first. My memories of getting G.I. Joe toys are associated with Christmas morning and I would always receive a few. My first ones were Gung-Ho, Major Bludd, and Doc. Then I was off to the races! The next ones I got after that were Breaker and Grunt. Then for Cobra, I got Firefly. But the first vehicle I ever got was the APC. Man putting on those tiny decals was a pain...

THE ENERGON UNIVERSE CHECKLIST

- ☐ MASK #2 AVAILABLE 7/8
- ☐ TRANSFORMERS #34 AVAILABLE 7/8
- ☐ G.I. JOE #24 AVAILABLE 7/15
- ☐ VOID RIVALS #32 AVAILABLE 7/22

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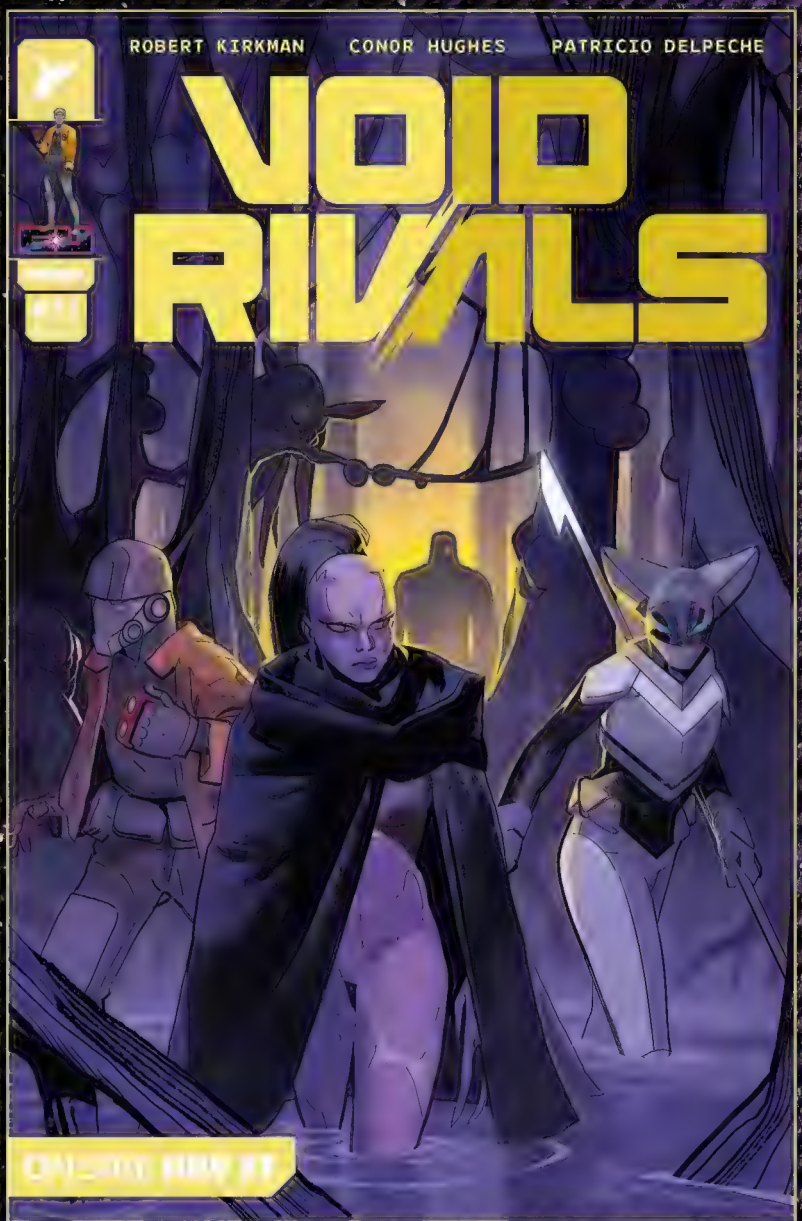

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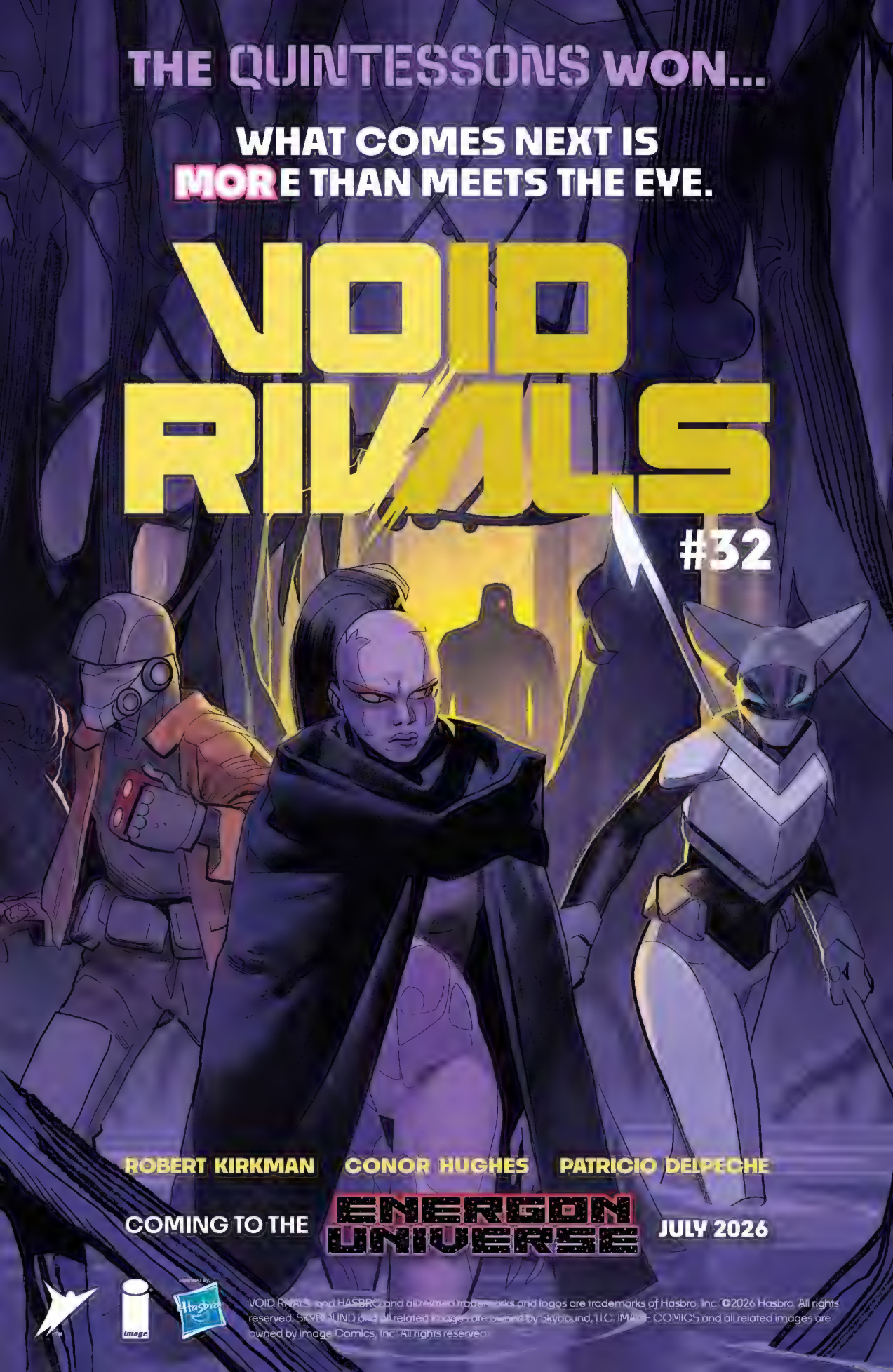

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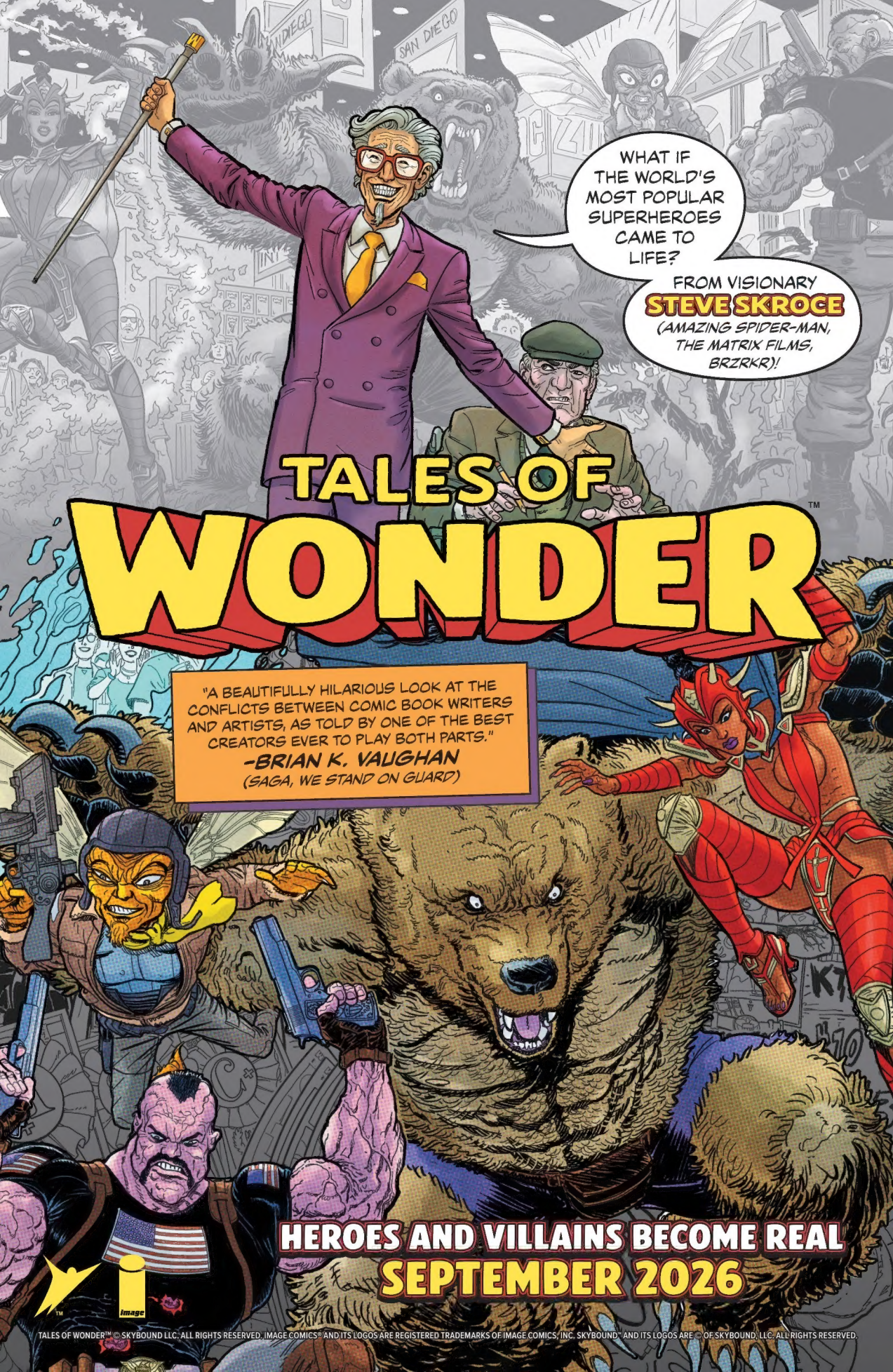
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